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# Reception and Experimentation of the Urdu Literary Form: The Case of the Ghaẓal in America



## Reception of Ghaẓal in America

On the ghaẓal's reception in America Agha Shahid Ali commented:

> the form has really been utterly misunderstood in America, with these free verse ghaẓals. I mean, that's just not the ghaẓal.[1]

He dismisses ghaẓals of Adrienne Rich, calling attention to their lack of "cultural location" and "formal unity" which Urdu ghaẓal is known for. Like her free verse poems, her ghaẓals too foreground some political and social issues of her age and even though she aims at bridging the gap between the Orient and the West, she cannot attain full "cultural reconciliation and cross racial identification"[2] through her ghaẓals. Her ghaẓals have more in common with modern American free verse poetry than the traditional Urdu ghaẓal which she tries to emulate.

## Urdu Ghaẓal

Urdu ghaẓal is known for strict metrical unity, for emotional coherence and for contextually independent couplets. Historically associated with singing, the ghaẓal has always been a popular poetic form in the East. This has allowed the ghaẓal form to create an emotional bond with the outer world. In his examination of Ghalib's ghaẓal '*naqsh faryādi hai kis kī shokhī-i taḥrīr kā*,' Faiz tunes his ears to the

sequence of music in the verses. The musicality lends special mood to the ghaẓal as Faiz explains in his critical article:

> the unity that is found in the ghaẓal is not one of a certain thought or subject, but it is a unity that one can call mood or state of mind.[3]

He further explains that this unity is both internal and external. The internal is not clearly perceptible while the external is discernible through metre and the selection of rhyme and rhythm. Thus, feeling and mood are special to ghaẓal and are rendered through music created by poetic diction.

Ghaẓal, for long, has been associated with love poetry but Urdu ghaẓal poets and critics agree that its canvas is much broader than this. They regard this definition as reductive in terms of the scope of the ghaẓal and creating unnecessary confusion. Apart from its usual physical and metaphysical themes like love, betrayal, destiny, etc., the ghaẓal form was employed as a medium of expression for the collective as well as individual misfortunes of those who lived during the turbulent times of the nineteenth century in the Indian Subcontinent when the Mughal Empire was declining and its capital Delhi was repeatedly sacked by foreign invaders. This political history is closely related to the cultural history of those times and ghaẓal became a reservoir of local sentiments as well as a record of these turbulences.

On the absence of thematic unity in ghaẓal couplets, Sheikh Salah-ud-din offers an interesting explanation. He uses the metaphor of a traveller climbing a mountain on a dark, stormy night and unable to see anything in the surrounding darkness. His only aid is the lightening that strikes from time to time, lighting the whole landscape, allowing the traveller to find his way.[4] Salah-ud-din compares every couplet of a ghaẓal to a flash of lightening that lights the whole landscape of a ghaẓal and the whole ghaẓal to the design in the mind of its artist. In one of his essays, Allama Iqbal attributes this intentional incongruity among couplets of a ghaẓal to the

Persian influence. He likens the Persian imagination to a butterfly that flutters over different flowers and is never capable of the whole view of the garden. In his own ghaẓals, Iqbal demonstrates a visible pattern of thought and a clear message while maintaining the decorum of the ghaẓal style.[5] Ghaẓal has also been criticized for its insistence on *qāfia*[6] and *radīf*[7] which are seen as limiting the imagination of the poet and checking his intuitive powers. However, the ghaẓal form does not suffer from monotony and predictability. Woodland examines the role of refrain in ghaẓals in his essay "Memory's Homeland: Agha Shahid Ali and the Hybrid Ghaẓal."[8] He turns to Hollander's hypothetical "referential scale"[9] of refrain to show different uses of refrain in the ghaẓal. At one end of the scale, Hollander locates the "purely musical" which serves only the aesthetic function with meaning remaining the same throughout. At the other end, he places an "optimum density of reference, in which each return accrue[s] new meaning."[10] Hollander proposes that it is possible to encounter new effect even though there is very little semantic variation as in the case of the ghaẓal where refrain places limitations on expression, therefore to situate any given instance of refrain on a "referential scale" according to the degree of "new meaning" generated or the amount of "original meaning" restored. In the ghaẓal, where every couplet is connected through refrain and rhyme only, the case for refrain and its function within the whole structure becomes extremely significant. What must not be forgotten is that ghaẓal is also meant to be sung and that "the meanings are amplified in singing."[11]

The refrain, therefore, does not limit meaning but becomes so fused with the new idea that in every couplet it is rendered new and fresh.

**Ghaẓal in America**

American critics see the ghaẓal form as "archaic, elaborate, and unyielding" and for most American ghaẓal poets it is "counter logic to Western rationalism."[12] Despite its many limitations, the American ghaẓal is a landmark achievement.

Schneiderman distinguishes American ghaẓal from its eastern counterpart thus:

> American ghaẓal takes on its own properties, while not forgetting or revising its history.[13]

There is no doubt that the path of the American ghaẓal poets is laden with complexities. Some arising out of cultural alienation while others are due to the ghaẓal's structural rigidity. For Kashmiri born American poet, Agha Shahid Ali, this daunting task was made easier because of his eastern roots. Shahid was able to "take up the defence of the ghaẓal's structural integrity – its rules and regulations, so to speak – as it passes into English."[14] It is generally understood that when a form moves across languages, not all its elements are reproducible. The images, associations, motifs and expectations are untranslatable. Moreover, Urdu metres are very elaborate and resist absolute imitation. What Shahid was able to do for his English audience through his "relentless, charismatic efforts" was to give them ghaẓals where "departures" from formal rules became simple "deviations."[15] Shahid has been able to restore the ghaẓal in English with all its formal constraints "offering English language writers a form that could avoid the unities of narrative or argument, and allow a multifaceted approach to a single subject, like exile or rain."[16]

**The Legacy of Agha Shahid Ali**

Shahid's ghaẓals contain elements of the traditional form: *maṯla'*[17], *rhyme, refrain, maqṯa'*[18] caesura before refrain in every second line of couplet, and poet's pen name in the last couplet. As with the Urdu ghaẓal, the whole structure of his ghaẓals revolves around associations and memory. The language is simple but evocative. There is magic, rhythm, flow, and spontaneity in the couplets. A deep sense of longing prevails in his ghaẓals, and the mood is "deeply melancholic." Through his efforts he wished to reveal the wealth of Eastern culture with its history of literary traditions and epistemic revolutions to the English speaking world. In the introductory

comments to *The Rebel's Silhouette*, Shahid tentatively enquires:

> Will something be borne across to the exclusively English reader through my translations?[19]

This concern perhaps also haunts him when he composes ghaẓals in English – he is well aware that he is carrying the burden of two different cultures and does not want to show any one of them in a lesser light:

> I have not surrendered any part of me; rather, my claims to both Urdu and English have become greater. The way the raga and the poem became the others for Begum Akhtar, so have Urdu and English become for me. My two loyalties, on loan to each other, are now so one that the loan has been forgiven. Not forgotten.[20]

He is conscious of the difficulties in composing ghaẓal in English but accepts it as a challenge to justify his claim to the two cultures he belonged to. His collection of ghaẓals called *Call Me Ishmael Tonight: A Book of Ghaẓals* contains 34 ghaẓals. They are longer than traditional Urdu ghaẓals, consisting of eleven, thirteen or fifteen couplets. Initially Shahid did not give his ghaẓals any titles but in his later edition these ghaẓals are accompanied with titles in accordance with Western poetic tradition and most of them are named after their refrains. This is clearly an attempt to emphasize upon his American readers the significance of a refrain in a ghaẓal. The repetition which creates a bond with the audience in poetic symposiums functions as a uniting element for readers lending coherence to the whole structure of the ghaẓal. Along with the *radīf* it connects the otherwise disjointed couplets of the ghaẓal.

In his ghaẓal "For You" there are thirteen couplets all linked to each other through the *radīf* or refrain 'for you.' As is customary in Urdu ghaẓals, the opening couplet introduces the scheme of the entire ghaẓal:

> Did we run out of things or just a *name* **for you**?
> Above us the sun doubles its *acclaim* **for you**.[21]

The *radīf*, *qāfia* and the metrical length of the verses are all established in this *maṯla'*. There is no enjambment between lines and the *qāfia* also ensures the caesura just before the *radīf*. A mood of light sarcasm is set in these two lines with the poet addressing his beloved and rebuking her for her fickleness, typical of the traditional ghaẓal style. The conceit involving 'sun' emphasizes the beauty and fame of the beloved; the centre of the universe has shifted from the 'sun' to the beloved, reminiscent of John Donne's metaphysical conceits in "Good Morrow." Such harping on the theme of love and the beloved's charm is common in the Urdu ghaẓal. There is also a couplet in this ghaẓal which is reminiscent of Ghalib:

At my every word they cry, "Who the hell are you?"
What would you reply if they thus sent Fame to you?

The conversational style was a common feature of Ghalib's ghaẓals and one of his very popular ghaẓals begins thus:

To all I say, you rejoin, pray what is this?
You tell me, for conversing, what style is this?

*Har ēk bāt pē kehtē ho tum kē tū kya hai*
*tumḫi kaho kē yē andāz̤-i guftugū kya hai*

Both lament the attitude of people around them. While Ghalib's rejoinder has a cutting edge, Shahid carefully chooses his words to balance the refrain and the rhyme. Thus, his couplet appears more contrived as compared to Ghalib's whose verses are spontaneous and at the same time more lyrical. In the next few couplets, Shahid also evokes the language and imagery typical of the Urdu ghaẓal:

What a noise the sentences make writing themselves–
Here's every word that we used as a flame for you.

I remember your wine in my springtime of sorrow.
Now the world lies broken. Is it the same for you?

The words ‘flame’ and ‘wine’ and ‘springtime’ are part of the stock vocabulary of Urdu ghaẓal. They conjure multiple meanings and someone who has read Urdu ghaẓal can connect with these images and find a way through obscurity. ‘Flame’ or *shama*‘ is traditionally associated with the beloved. The image of ‘flame’ is traditionally associated with indifference and disdain at the plight of thronging moths. Shahid here has added a twist to the customary ghaẓal implication; every word is a ‘flame,’ in other words, betrays a deep sense of longing which the poet feels for his beloved. The ‘flame’ is not the beloved but becomes synonymous with the beloved in the same way the beloved cannot be separated from the memory associated with her. The evocation of ‘wine’ imagery to drown sorrow is again a cliché often associated with the Urdu ghaẓal. The poet says that he has drunk ‘your wine in the springtime of sorrow.’ The complication of the poet’s feelings for his beloved is laid bare. He drank the ‘wine’ of the beloved’s love when his ‘sorrows’ were just beginning (‘springtime’) and now he is completely shattered because his love is still young but the beloved is unyielding, ‘is it the same for you?’ Not being loved in return, he is ‘broken,’ shattered and feeling devastated.

In other couplets he alludes to contemporary politics without breaking with the mood that has been established in the opening couplets:

> The birthplace of written language is bombed to nothing
> How neat, dear America, is this game for you?
>
> The angel of history wears all expressions at once.
> What will you do? Look, his wings are aflame for you.

Contemporary affairs are alluded to in the ghaẓal but there is no bitterness. Shahid softens his tone with almost a neutral diction: all the terror that bombing brings to mind is balanced by the near sarcastic utterance, ‘is this game for you?’ This calls to mind the indifference of the beloved who enjoys the sight of the lover writhing in pain. Shahid lovingly chides

his dear country, America, for creating terror through bombing. The next couplet may well be taken as description of the ghaẓal which 'wears all expressions at once,' or it may be taken as a political comment where history acts as reminder, 'his wings aflame' and warns of more bloodshed. The ghaẓal ends with a *maqṭa'* or last couplet containing the pen name of the poet:

> God's dropped the scales. Whose wings will cover me, Michael?
> Don't pronounce the sentence *Shahid* overcame for you.

His ghaẓal "Of Fire" has more music and demonstrates greater fluidity. The words move to the slow rhythm of music sometimes inherent in the diction, and sometimes imposed by punctuation. The music is reminiscent of Urdu ghaẓals which are known for their melodic effect. Both refrain and rhyme are carefully chosen and beautifully blended. Contrasting images weave in and out of couplets. The opposing images in the first lines of couplets foreground the tension which is then neatly resolved in the succeeding lines. The ghaẓal adheres to the form of Urdu ghaẓal except in length, consisting of fifteen couplets. The ghaẓal opens in the customary style, which baffles and outwits the readers, setting a mood that the poet cannot escape from through the rest of the poem. The stakes are raised and tension is fore grounded:

> In a mansion once of love I lit a chandelier of fire…
> I stood on a stair of water; I stood on a stair of fire.

Love and fire coexist; fire and water also coexist. What is the poet suggesting? Shahid is weary of love here which is so uncertain. His inability to soothe his burning heart is reflected in the phrase, 'on a stair of water.' Water takes the shape of the mould it is placed in and has no certainty of its own. This uncertainty in the act of love appears repeatedly in the Urdu ghaẓal and gives rise to the feeling of an extreme state of dejection and longing in the poet. Shahid here has employed new conceits for the old theme. The couplet may also be a comment on the situation in his homeland because in his free verse poem, Shahid repeatedly employs the images of fire and

water when speaking of Kashmir. The 'mansion of love' may be his home in Kashmir or Kashmir itself which was being destroyed by war, represented here as 'fire.' Sometimes there was peace with ceasefire (I stood on a stair of water) but then again war would break out (I stood on a stair of fire). In another couplet, the same feeling is displayed:

> You have remained with me even in the missing of you?
> Could a financier then ask me for a new share of fire?
>
> I keep losing this letter to the gods of abandon.
> Won't you tell me how you found it-in what hemisphere of fire?

The opening lines have already made clear that this 'beloved' is his homeland, Kashmir. So we construe that Kashmir has never been out of his mind. The reference to a letter in the second couplet may be a reference to a true incident which he also takes up in his poem "The Country Without a Post Office." All letters sent to Kashmir lay abandoned as fires burned down all houses in Kashmir during the uprising in the 90's. No news would come in or go out of Kashmir in those days and loved ones waited in agony to hear about their families. Kashmir was under siege and all connection with the rest of the world was broken. Shahid's grief knew no bounds when he was told how a letter he had written to his father was found by chance among hundred others lying as litter in the destroyed post office undelivered to his family. In many poems, Shahid recalls his growing anguish when there was no news about his family for days. His imagination may have taken several trips to his beloved homeland in search of news about his loved ones but always returned with wings 'singed by a courtier of fire.' Shahid's political commentary is offered in a language rendered neutral by lyricism and ambiguity. Since the ghaẓal is foremost a vehicle for expressing love, the platform is hardly used for inciting hatred and violence.

Agha Shahid Ali managed to introduce the ghaẓal, an eastern poetic form, to the American poetic scene while maintaining its traditional attributes. His ghaẓals are embellished with traditional imagery and are balanced deftly on *radīf* and *qāfia*. To the average American mind the repetitive structure and clichéd imagery of the ghaẓal is not very appealing but Shahid shows them how crucial they are to the ghaẓal. His ghaẓals are musical and defined by their emotional intensity. The music helps him successfully create a passionate mood that pervades the entire ghaẓal in the fashion of the Urdu ghaẓal.

**Adrienne Rich's Contribution**

For the American poet, Adrienne Rich, the ghaẓal was more of a personal experience. In her own words, her reasons for turning to the ghaẓal form were "personal" and owed "much to the presence of Ghalib" to her mind. In an attempt to vocalize her resentment against what she calls the American 'avant-garde' poetry, Rich turns to this eastern form. The ghaẓal beckoned to her not only as an act of rebellion, but also as a weapon of self-defence, and a means of reconciling with her own self. Caplan admits that Rich's ghaẓals have completely missed the real essence and have more to do with the "confusion" and "fragmentation" she was experiencing at the time. In an interview Rich explains the reasons for turning towards this poetic form:

> I certainly had to find an equivalent for the kinds of fragmentation I was feeling, and confusion.[22]

Caplan argues that Rich around the time had developed a poetic style that renounced any "perfection of order" making it easier for her to write in a form that did not demand coherence and order that were vital ingredients for American poetry. More important is the way Rich offers a tribute to this oriental poetic form in the same interview:

> I found a structure which allowed for a highly associative field of images. And once I saw how that worked, I felt instinctively, this is exactly what I

need, there is no traditional Western order that I have found that will contain all these materials.[23]

Through her study of Ghalib, Rich understood what evaded most of her contemporaries - that ghaẓal offered space both for subjective brooding and social commentary.

In a remarkable way, some of Rich's ghaẓals do contain the subtlety and humour that Ghalib's ghaẓals are so known for. The tongue-in-cheek approach is reminiscent of Ghalib as in the couplet:

Did you think I was talking about my life?
I was trying to drive a tradition up against a wall.

In most of her ghaẓals, she adopts the conversational style that she had associated with her master and blends humour with bitterness. Her ghaẓals are revolutionary as well as personal:

A dead mosquito, flattened against a door;
His image could survive our comings and our goings.

Rich's ghaẓals occupy an important place in American ghaẓal poetry; while they reveal the limits of knowledge and understanding in adapting an alien form, they also show that the canvas of American poetry is vast enough to absorb other cultural forms.

In her introductory note to the *Leaflets: Poems 1965-1968*, she writes:

> My ghaẓals are personal and public, American and twentieth century; but they owe much to the presence of Ghalib in my mind: a poet self-educated and profoundly learned, who owned no property and borrowed his books, writing in an age of political and cultural break-up.[24]

Rich only knew Ghalib through Aijaz Ahmed's English translation of Urdu ghaẓals of Mirẓa Ghalib. The aspects of Ghalib's life and world had more relevance for Rich. Living with no regular income and mostly in debt, Ghalib, the poet, suffered heavily but never lost faith in humanity. Ghalib's courage in the face of such tragedies left an indelible

impression on Rich's mind and her tribute to Ghalib has mostly to do with these character traits.

*Leaflets* contains seventeen ghaẓals. The section is titled "Ghaẓals: Homage to Ghalib." Every ghaẓal is no more than five or six couplets long. There is no regular metre or rhyme in her ghaẓals – the *qāfia* and *radīf* are clearly missing. The opening and closing couplets too are not written in the traditional manner of the ghaẓal. Over all, the form of her ghaẓals deviates from the traditional Urdu ghaẓal which has followed a strict pattern through centuries. Rich's recklessness may be due to two reasons. Her objective may not have been to emulate the form in its totality but only to create snapshots of her experiences though independent couplets. Or, as discussed above, it was only meant as a tribute to the Urdu poet – Ghalib – whose personality and poetry she felt demanded recognition. In her essay, "Form and Format", Rich has already expressed disgust with 'form' when it becomes 'format.' She could not emulate the form however intrinsic to the ghaẓal it may be. Still she decides to call her couplets 'ghaẓal' when they lack the traditional appeal altogether. Agha Shahid Ali was critical of her ghaẓals and refused to even classify them as 'ghaẓals,' yet he lauded her efforts:

> I do like many aspects of the so-called ghaẓals by many American poets (among the more vibrant examples, I would single out James Harrison, Adrienne Rich, Robert Mezey, and Galway Kinnell) and could make a case for their discarding of the form in the context of their immediate aesthetics and see in their ghaẓals a desire to question all kinds of authorities by getting away from linearity and that crippling insistence on "unity."[25]

Her first ghaẓal (7/12/68) in the collection is simple and direct.

> The clouds are electric in this university.
> The lovers astride the tractor burn fissures through the hay.
>
> When I look at that wall I shall think of you

And of what you did not paint there.

Only the truth makes the pain of lifting a hand worthwhile:
The prism staggering under the blows of the raga.[26]

The couplets are all thematically independent in accordance with the traditional form but the *qāfia* and *radīf* are missing. Also lacking is a dominant mood which pervades the Urdu ghaẓal from beginning to end. Diction and imagery set the tone or mood in the ghaẓal and in Ghalib's case a metaphysical quest or an intellectual reasoning determines the gravity of experience. There is none of that in Rich's ghaẓal but it is written in a dramatic style and addressed to an anonymous partner. The conversational tone here is a reminiscent of Ghalib though missing the cutting edge that is so worthy of him.

In the first couplet of the ghaẓal, natural elements coexist with the 'lovers' and the images of 'electric' clouds and burning 'fissures' in the midst of 'lovers' upset the otherwise serenity. The next couplet is yoked through enjambment, and so is strangely misplaced here. However, it evokes a particular memory through 'that wall' which forges an immediate connection with the anonymous partner. The mere suggestion of something left unsaid, unexplored or unattended is an indication of weakening connections, of barriers of silence between relationships. Perhaps the image of 'wall'- unmoving and solid - is a reality that was ignored for long but not anymore. The third couplet is a tribute to courage and resilience in the face of adversity. What is 'worthwhile' is the light of truth spreading as through a prism in all directions and turning writing into a cause.

Rich believes that aesthetics is as important as the social context of a poem. In her opinion, all the textual and contextual elements of a poem express its social content. Textual possibilities refer to the poetic choices that the poet has to make including form, metaphors, sounds, while contextual

possibilities mean historical facts or conditions that are relevant to the composition of the poem. Although for Rich both are significant, it is the contextual that eventually has dominance over the textual. The 'necessary word' cannot be a substitute for a 'foolish syllable.' Rich's strong engagement with her work demands greater attention from her readers, expecting them to reflect and make connections while interpreting. The issue of involving the readers as *engage* is very important to Rich. In "Someone is Writing a Poem" she comments:

> I can't write a poem to manipulate you; it will not succeed. Perhaps you have read such poems and decided you don't care for poetry; something turned you away. I can't write a poem from dishonest motives; it will betray its shoddy provenance, like an ill-made tool, scissors, a drill, it will not serve its purpose, it will come apart in your hands at the point of stress. I can't write a poem simply from good intentions, wanting to set things right, make it all better; the energy will leak out of it, it will end by meaning less than it says.[27]

The ghaẓal (7/13/68), "The ones who camped on the slopes," is more dense and layered with meaning though the form is further from how a ghaẓal is supposed to be. Lacking in the rhythm and rhyme though structured in autonomous couplets, the ghaẓal moves like a poem written in free verse style without continuity of thought. The unity lent by a single emotion is missing and the central metaphor or tropes do not embrace the 'mood' of the ghaẓal. The first couplet distinguishes 'us' from 'them':

> The ones who camped on the slopes, below the bare summit,
> Saw differently from us, who breathed thin air and kept walking.[28]

This is a political comment in which Rich divides the community in two groups: one which 'kept walking' and the other which 'camped on the slopes.' This makes a world of difference in the ways both perceive things around them and

offer judgments. Rich is not bitter here; her humanism transcends discrimination and prejudice on the basis of difference of opinion. The second couplet beautifully creates a tension and had it not been for enjambment, it would be a perfect ghaẓal couplet:

> Sleeping back-to-back, man and woman, we were more conscious
> Than either of us awake and alone in the world.[29]

The emphasis on gender here is very strange given Rich's concerns with relationships between opposite gender. How could man and woman be alone when they are together 'lying back-to-back?' What does it mean to be awake and asleep here?' These questions are worth pondering over but the general idea is hid behind the irony that while 'we' slept 'we were more conscious' and were at same time 'alone' in the world. The loneliness is implied with 'we' and Rich leaves the reader with a puzzle so common in the Urdu ghaẓal. The final couplet demands our attention once again:

> Don't look for me in the room I have left;
> The photograph shows just a white rocking-chair,
> still rocking.[30]

The image of a rocking chair 'still rocking' creates ambiguity. Someone has left but the chair is still rocking. There is some deeper suggestion here than the mere obvious meaning that the person will not come back again. Perhaps she means that she never left at all and the last two words 'still rocking' are symbolic. Such tension and ambiguity would be in line with the traditional style of the ghaẓal, thus, offer a befitting close to her ghaẓal.

The ghaẓal 'Did you think I was talking about my life?' (7/14/68) negotiates identities in the complex network of people which is the society. The whole ghaẓal is charged with an emotion discernible through the words and images that garnish each line. Though the form is still not close to what we may describe as the ghaẓal, the overall mood of the ghaẓal is captured. The conversational style and the irony intended as jest are fresh reminders of Ghalib, who was so adept at

combining bitterness with a good sense of humour. Rich's opening is reminiscent of Ghalib:

> Did you think I was talking about my life?
> I was trying to drive a tradition up against a wall.[31]

Rich or the persona rebukes those who accuse her only of writing about herself. She seems to be asking if her personal life had a separate existence from her community. All along when everyone thought she promoted her experiences and emotions, she was doing a service to the community. Rich was often in the limelight for her penchant for description of the lesbian life that she lead. Her poetry was a rebellious cry against discrimination of colour, race, and gender. She opposed patriarchy and oppression of all forms. The 'wall' is the long standing 'tradition' which she is trying to bring down. In line with the tradition of the ghaẓal, her personal cry is a general lament as Rich does not dissociate herself from her community. This is how she expresses the problem:

> In the red wash of the darkroom, I see myself clearly;
> When the print is developed and handed about, the face is nothing to me.[32]

Rich's failure in ghaẓal is not because she failed as an artist. It is not easy to render the ghaẓal in the English language due to the intricacies of form and metre, as a few ghaẓals of even Agha Shahid Ali have resulted in free style poems rather than ghaẓals. It is clear that Rich had limitations placed on her due to lack of knowledge of a foreign language but more than that there is an utter disregard for the sense of tradition that the Urdu ghaẓal is known for. Full comprehension of art is linked to an understanding of the culture it is produced in and most American ghaẓal writers have failed to comprehend its significance when they emulated the form in English. It is natural that in a new world a new stock of imagery and metaphors will emerge but building on associations and stimulating certain memory or 'schema' in the reader's mind is a significant aspect of the ghaẓal. Ghaẓal is both personal and public, and that is why it can be read at multiple levels. The

American ghaẓals by native American poets have thus become victims of linearity rather than an escape from it while Shahid armed with the knowledge of both languages and cultures has borne it well.

To conclude, the contemporary American poetic scene is witnessing an increasing interest in eastern poetic traditions especially the ghaẓal. The pioneering efforts of Adrienne Rich and the legacy of cultural fusion initiated by Agha Shahid Ali have left lasting imprints on the American ghaẓal. It is no less than an irony that the ghaẓal has been losing its ground to free verse and other western poetic experimentations in the Subcontinent but at the same time it has found out a new home. The ghaẓal form has been 'Americanised' and has emerged as a distinct poetic form from its Urdu roots.



## NOTES

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1 Christine Benvenuto, "Agha Shahid Ali", *The Massachusetts Review* 43, No. 2, The Massachusetts Review, Inc (2002): 261–73, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25091852.

2 David Caplan, "In That Thicket of Bitter Roots: The Ghaẓal in America", *VQR* 80, No. 4 (2005). http://www.vqronline.org/essay/%E2%80%9C-thicket-bitter-roots%E2%80%9D-ghazal-america

3 Intezar Hussain, *An Introduction to the Poetry of Faiz Ahmed Faiz* (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1989), 84.

4 T. Hashmi, *Urdu Ghaẓal: Nai Tashkīl* (Islamabad: National Book Islamabad, 2008), 26.

5 T. Hashmi, *Urdu Ghaẓal: Nai Tashkīl*, 25.

6 The rhyming pattern of the word(s) just before the *radīf* at the end of the line in a *shē'r*. This is a necessary requirement, followed even in the absence of other rules.

7 Word or phrase that is repeated at the end of the second line in every *shē'r*. The SAME word(s) are repeated. The *maṯla'* has both lines ending in the *radīf*.

[8] M. Woodland, "Memory's Homeland: Agha Shahid Ali and the Hybrid Ghaẓal", *English Studies in Canada* 31, No. 2 (2005): 249-272. Via ebsco.com

[9] John Hollander, "Breaking into Song: Some notes on Refrain" In *Lyric Poetry Beyond New Criticism*, edited by Chaviva Hosek and Patricia Parker (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press,1985), 77.

[10] M. Woodland, 252.

[11] M. A. Farooqi, "Ghaẓal, Ghaẓaal, and Ghaẓelle", *Dawn* Magazine, 2015. http://www.dawn.com/news/1190816

[12] David Caplan.

[13] Jason Schneiderman, "The Loved One Always Leaves: The Poetic Friendship of Agha Shahid Ali and James Merrill", *The Free Library* 43, No. 1 (2014), 11-12. http://www.thefreelibrary.com/The_Loved_One_Always_Leaves:_The Poetic Friendship of Agha Shahid Ali...-a0380527466

[14] David Caplan.

[15] David Caplan.

[16] Jason Schneiderman.

[17] This is the first *shē'r* (verse) of a ghaẓal, and both lines of the *shē'r* must end in *radīf*. Usually a ghaẓal has only one *maṯla'*. If a ghaẓal has more than one *maṯla'*, then the second *maṯla'* is called ' *maṯla'-i ṡāni*'.

[18] A *shā'ir* (poet) usually had a pen-name under which he wrote. The pen-name is called '*takhalluṣ*'. The *shē'r* in which *takhalluṣ* is included is called the *maqṯa'*. It is the last *shē'r* of the Ghaẓal.

[19] Agha Shahid Ali. *The Rebel's Silhouette.* 1991. XXV.

[20] See introduction of *The Rebel's Silhouette,* a collection of select poetry of Faiz that Ali translated.

[21] Agha Shahid Ali. *Call Me Ishmael Tonight: A Book of Ghaẓals.* W. W. Norton & Company. 2003.

[22] David Caplan.

[23] David Caplan.

[24] Adrienne Rich. *Leaflets*. W. W. Norton & Company. 1969.

[25] A. S. Ali, *Ravishing Disunities: Real Ghaẓals in English*, (New England: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), 11.

[26] A. Rich, *Leaflets; Poems, 1965-1968* (New York: Norton, 1969), 61.

[27] A. Rich, *What is Found There: Notebooks on Poetry and Politics* (New York: Norton, 1993), 84.

[28] A. Rich, *Leaflets; Poems, 1965-1968* (New York: Norton, 1969), 61.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid., 62.

[32] Ibid.

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